CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.547
29 March 1990

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 March 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Emeke Ayo Azikiwe (Nigeria)

GE.90-60485/1770B

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 547th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference continues today its consideration of agenda item 4, "Chemical weapons". However, in accordance with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

After we reach the end of the list of speakers, I shall convene an informal meeting of the Conference to consider how to proceed with agenda items 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", and 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", as well as a request from a non-member to participate in the work of the Conference.

I have on my list of speakers today the representatives of Italy, Morocco, Ethiopia and Argentina. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso.

Mr. NEGROTTO CAMBIASO (Italy) (translated from French): Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I fall in with the tradition of civility and courtesy which is a part of the work of the Conference on Disarmament and extend to you, on the occasion of my first statement in plenary, my warm appreciation and that of my delegation for the exemplary way in which you have been presiding over our work during this month of March which is now drawing to an end. You have done so with discretion, balance and efficiency, the ingredients necessary for good diplomacy. Allow me at the same time to thank Ambassador Benhima, who welcomed me to Geneva so cordially, and your predecessor, Ambassador Wagenmakers, for the patience and tenacity with which he discharged his functions in the delicate starting-up phase. I would like to assure the future President, Ambassador Kamal of the very committed and convinced co-operation of the Italian delegation. Finally, allow me to express my appreciation for the valuable support being provided by the secretariat, thanks in particular to Ambassador Komatina and Ambassador Berasategui.

None of you, I believe, will be surprised if my first statement is entirely devoted to the negotiations for the total and universal prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons. Many speakers have already stressed their central role in the present context of our work; and you are all, I think, familiar with Italy's commitment in this area, at the political level - I would say - first of all, here and elsewhere, in constantly repeating opportune et importune, as St. Paul would say, our conviction of the importance and urgency of the problem. We are now entering a phase of the negotiations which we all consider to be the final stage, while divergences remain among us concerning the consideration of the time factor and questions requiring prior solution.

In numerous statements made by eminent colleagues who have long been participating in these negotiations, it has been maintained that we are involved in a way in a race against time. I fully subscribe to this statement. If we are not able to speed up the pace of our deliberations, we will face the risk of a growing dyscrasia between the evolution of the real situation and the ideal point towards which our debates are converging.

(Mr. Negrotto Cambiasco, Italy)

The present situation in fact is one of real discrimination. Theoretically, today we have reached the high point of discrimination. Italy does not possess chemical weapons and does not know how many other countries, aside from the United States and the Soviet Union, have such weapons at present. The convention represents the only means of achieving a progressive reduction of the anomalies until they are eliminated. Hence what is discriminatory, as we see it, is not the convention but rather its absence. For this reason Italy, which rejects this horrible category of weapons at the conceptual and at the political level, also feels the need for the rapid finalization of the convention, as an imperative that stems from its own perception of security: a convention which will free the Earth of all chemical weapons within 10 years after it enters into force; which, through effective surveillance, will prevent any covert production; and which, at the same time, inter alia as a result of appropriate co-operation measures, will make this attractive and acceptable to all.

Today emphasis is rightly placed, in all disarmament sectors, on the increasing importance of measures for building confidence. This has been and is still being discussed a great deal, and not without tangible successes, in the European negotiations. Consequently we wonder whether even in the CW negotiations, aside from the essential question of verification, the individuation of common ground in the area of assistance and technical co-operation might not constitute per se an important element of confidence-building and an additional encouragement to become a party. I have already referred to our perception of the convention as being the only means for reaching a more pacificatory situation. In this respect the question of assistance seems to us to be of special political importance, in the transitional period but also beyond.

Challenge inspections are, in Italy's view, the confidence-building measure par excellence. Intensive efforts have been made to uphold the merits of a purely bilateral, or alternatively a purely multilateral approach, in a debate which seems to be heading towards more balanced consideration of this dilemma, in which the two aspects are merged one into the other in a relationship of complementarity. Indeed, the very originality of this treaty lies in a balanced combination of bilateral and multilateral elements. Thus while the starting-point of challenge verification falls essentially, within the bilateral sphere, subsequent intervention by the multilateral organization implies inevitably, as my delegation sees it, that the final evaluation of the possible existence of a violation, as well as any decisions resulting from that evaluation, would fall to the body whose task will be to ensure that the convention is observed.

I would now like to express a few ideas concerning the problem of universality. This is a question which goes beyond a confidence-building measure, of which it is in a way the prerequiste. I do not think anyone would deny that the convention must be universally accepted if we hope that at the end of the transitional period chemical weapons will truly be eliminated from the Earth. Differences remain, however, concerning the most effective means of reaching that point. In this respect we deem it important not to forget the diversity of perceptions of security which exist in different countries, which sometimes face specific difficult situations. Thus in the present phase

(Mr. Negrotto Cambiasco, Italy)

of major change and movement on the international scene, the regional dimension may be seen as a more and more independent variable as compared to the bipolar order, where security perceptions at the national level may influence analyses and cause security requirements to be overestimated.

Italy is ready to accede to the convention immediately when the time comes, within the desirable context of co-ordinated accession by a number of countries. Italy is also willing, through the strong relations of co-operation which it maintains with the countries of its own region, to continue exchanges of view on the problem of universality with all the countries sharing its concerns and interests.

In a Europe which is no longer squeezed between walls and curtains, a process is emerging which - as the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs said in Vienna - could bring about the rediscovery of a civilization where we are ultimately "enemyless". The conclusion of our negotiations on chemical weapons would not only produce the most ambitious result ever achieved within a multilateral disarmament system, but could also become a driving element for subsequent achievements, perhaps within the context of an updated role for the Conference on Disarmament. We have to seize the momentum, as our English-speaking friends say, borrowing from Latin the idea of a period of time which is never complete - and certain events in the last few days are here to remind us of this truth. In the final analysis, these are encouraging signs which must be consolidated. But hope cannot be the monopoly of one continent or of a few countries, however important they may be. This is why we greatly appreciate the efforts which are being made towards the strengthening of all aspects of the future convention, even if it is not always easy for us fully to understand the need, at this stage, to get bogged down in prolonged debates on aspects which are essentially technical or of a drafting nature, or in conceptual disputes which run the risk of turning us away from what is essential. On technical aspects, in particular, we too are convinced that they could usefully be entrusted to a specific mechanism of the type proposed by the Australian delegation on behalf of the Western group: its very raison d'être is to speed up the pace of the negotiations. Likewise, we are in a position to confirm our full agreement on sending certain problems to the Preparatory Commission, or to a phase following the finalization of the convention, in the framework of the decision-making powers of the future organization.

The complexity of the problems of substance which still await solution should certainly not be underestimated; we have them all well in mind. Nevertheless we believe that it is possible to tackle the substance directly, under an overall approach which goes beyond excessive attention to specifics, without invoking an insufficient level of readiness or the need for a prior solution to other related technical aspects. Consequently, we appreciated the initiative taken by the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Hyltenius, designed to encourage a parallel and more general process of reflection, which, by freeing us from the grip of routine and our set roles, will force us to show our full hands.

Lastly, I would like to express Italy's appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the American and Soviet delegations. We are counting on them, and we are awaiting further progress, which could also contribute to the

(Mr. Negrotto Cambiasco, Italy)

accomplishment of our work. The Italian delegation is inspired by the speed and the concrete nature of the bilateral CW negotiations. They benefit from the existence of a political deadline, but also from a different structuring of meetings, similar to that which was adopted in Vienna. We wonder whether we could not try to do the same ourselves, beginning with the chemical weapons negotiations. Shorter sessions would enable us to cope better with the requirements of such complex negotiations. I will simply add that my country would be willing to consider the adoption of a division of work into four annual sessions, within as short a period of time as possible.

I would like to conclude by placing myself, as I did at the beginning of my statement, within the context of the tradition of courtesy which inspires this forum and which has such a pleasant resonance for our spirits. I would like to thank all the colleagues who have extended their welcome and best wishes to me as a newcomer. In turn I extend to them my wishes for serenity and success with respect and warmth.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco, Ambassador Benhima.

Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, as your presidency comes to an end, it is particularly pleasant for me to express to you as an eminent son of Nigeria my delegation's congratulations on the dignity and determination with which you have guided our work. Of course, I cannot resist the temptation of saying to your precedessor, Ambassador Wagenmakers, how much we value the qualities he showed during his term of office. Many colleagues have left us, called to other duties, and I send them my wishes for success in their new posts. To their successors I wish a warm welcome among us.

For some months now we have been witnessing a great unfolding of events on the international scene and the birth of profound changes in the arena of the European continent. Whether they prompt hope or uncertainty, they are the result of a relaxation of tension which began some years ago and has gradually spread its effects. Disarmament is one of the sectors benefiting from this new international environment, which should be exploited in our common quest for further progress in the negotiations. While it is obvious that the two super-Powers have special responsibilities, disarmament is still the cause belonging to the whole of mankind, and the Conference, which is the emanation of the international community, cannot abandon its objectives nor renounce its mandate as an organ for multilateral negotiation. None the less its vocation is to encourage initiatives taken elsewhere and to encourage others, particularly in sectors where positive developments have not occurred.

The Conference's resolute involvement in the elaboration of a convention on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons proves that this objective is within our reach. It is encouraging to note the substantial progress made last year on certain fundamental issues relating to the future convention. In this context I would like to pay tribute to the excellent work done by the Ad hoc Committee under the skilful and dynamic chairmanship of Ambassador Pierre Morel. I hope that under the competent guidance of

(Mr. Benhima, Morocco)

Ambassador Hyltenius the Ad hoc Committee will achieve a breakthrough which will clear the way for further progress. The consensus reached at the Paris Conference, the Canberra declaration and General Assembly resolution 44/115A are all calls to the Conference to step up its work.

The current intensification of the negotiations, particularly in the light of the progress made in the bilateral American-Soviet talks, should allow a substantial reduction in points of divergence - we hope it will - and bring us closer to the finalization of the convention. In this context, my delegation shares the view that the keystone of the future convention should be an adequate system to verify compliance with the obligations arising from the treaty. Only a rigorous verification system can create confidence amongst the States parties. The proliferation of procedures which are at present being studied seems to us to be a positive factor, because it proves that effective verification is within our grasp since it is the expression of unanimity. To this end, we consider it essential to provide the inspection machinery with adequate resources so that it can carry out its mission properly. This machinery will have to have the necessary powers to enable it to make a judgement concerning compliance with the norms of the convention and the inspection reports submitted to it. An atmosphere of trust and co-operation should govern the conduct and implementation of this operation. The team responsible for the inspection should benefit from understanding and assistance on the part of the national authorities of the country being visited.

The scope of the future convention is also an issue of great importance, making it possible to gauge the extent of our commitments and give them appropriate content in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and particularly the Final Document of 1978. Our task is to proceed to the elimination of the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and their destruction, it being understood that the essential goal is the absolute prohibition of their use. On this latter aspect of the scope of the convention, my delegation, like all the members of the Group of 21, regrets the lack of consensus on the inclusion of the question of banning the use of chemical weapons in the mandate of the Ad hoc Committee. Since these elements represent the very reason why the convention exists, it goes without saying that its legal régime should be developed in such a way as to ensure that these postulates do not suffer from any exceptions. We must certainly set up flexible machinery which could help the parties to reach agreement on the entire text of the convention but that should in no way furnish a means by which the obligations entered into by all the parties could be weakened. It is just as necessary to arrive at unanimously agreed measures intended to deal with any situation which is not in accordance with the fundamental provisions of the treaty.

The realization of the international community's wish to produce a finalized chemical weapons treaty is above all a question of political will. This will is vital to ensure agreement by all concerned, particularly for achieving universality, a fundamental characteristic of this instrument without which our efforts would be in danger of being incomplete. The same political will should govern the search for consensus on the subject of the composition of the bodies responsible for monitoring the application of the

(Mr. Benhima, Morocco)

Treaty, particularly the Executive Council. The process of sketching out a number of criteria for the appointment of the future members of this Council should be pursued in the same spirit as last year in order to bring the different positions closer together. The main bodies of the future Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should have the necessary power to do their job properly. These bodies, the product of the will of the international community, should take account of the aspirations of all the parties in a balanced and non-discriminatory way. This is a necessary condition to guarantee technological co-operation among the States parties and free access for all to the purely civilian applications of the chemical industry.

While the conclusion of an agreement on the prohibition of chemical weapons represents a priority aim for our Conference, other issues are of no less primordial and crucial importance for this body. I have in mind nuclear disarmament, without which anything else that is achieved will remain precarious and subject to doubt. We reiterate the opinion that it is vital for our Conference to tackle the nuclear issues at last in order to justify its existence, which is closely linked with the nuclear threat hanging over the survival of mankind. The unrestrained nuclear arms race which has marked the last two decades has taken on substantial dimensions which are out of all proportion to the alleged requirements for security or deterrence. It was obviously time to start negotiations in the Conference to put an end to this competition. The dialogue under way between the two super-Powers on this subject has fortunately opened up some new prospects. At all events, our Conference cannot stand aside from this process.

The expected results of the future START agreement will, in spite of their scope, remain limited. Even after such an agreement, the arsenals of the two super-Powers will still contain no less than 30,000 nuclear warheads. The result will be continued serious disquiet at the risk of a nuclear holocaust, and for the future of détente in international relations. This is why we will not cease repeating that no nuclear disarmament process, however broad it may be, will be complete as long as it is not based on a nuclear test ban. In this respect we are bound to note that our Conference has been making persistent efforts for more than five years to agree on the terms of the mandate of the ad hoc committee on a total nuclear test ban. In this context we cannot but welcome the actions which the delegation of Japan has been pursuing along these lines for a year now. We are very grateful to Ambassador Donowaki for his willingness to continue the consultations led by his predecessor, Ambassador Yamada, in looking for a consensus on the mandate of the committee in question. I would like to assure him of our full support and co-operation. In the view of my delegation, the formulation of the terms of this mandate does not matter very much, as long as the prime goal of the committee is the conclusion of a treaty containing internationally binding legal norms and directed towards a total nuclear test ban. The re-establishment of this committee in the coming weeks will certainly make a positive contribution to the success of the fourth conference of States parties to review the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty, which is to take place next summer.

(Mr. Benhima, Morocco)

The use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes remains one of the dearest wishes of the international community. Our Conference, as an international disarmament negotiating body, has the task of drafting legal rules to safeguard this common heritage of mankind from the arms race. We are bound to note that the Ad hoc Committee set up six years ago for that purpose has not yet met the hopes placed in it. The procedural approach embarked on by the Conference through the setting up of an Ad hoc Committee on this item in 1985 has not achieved its final aim of drawing up an international agreement intended to prevent an arms race in space, in accordance with paragraph 80 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is worth recalling that this document, as well as the numerous relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, urge the adoption of new measures and the commencement of appropriate international negotiations to prevent an arms race in outer space. The need, not to say the necessity, for codification and negotiating work of this kind was clearly recognized in the last report of the Ad hoc Committee on space. Its conclusions expressly affirmed that the legal régime applicable to space did not in itself guarantee the prevention of an arms race in that environment, which is why it was important to consolidate and strengthen the régime and enhance its effectiveness. If these observations enjoyed unanimous support in the Committee's report, desirable remedies should also have been agreed unanimously, in particular through the strengthening of the mandate of the Committee in question to enable it to negotiate measures to correct the shortcomings found in the legal régime for space. This is why, much as it welcomes the re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee on space, my delegation, like all the members of the group of non-aligned and neutral countries, still regrets the absence of a consensus on giving this Committee a negotiating mandate in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/112. Voicing this regret, however, cannot prevent us from hoping that under the chairmanship of Ambassador Shannon of Canada, whom we congratulate and wish every success, the Ad hoc Committee will finally complete its mandate to examine and identify issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in space. We have high hopes that this exercise will be completed so as to start the Ad hoc Committee on a negotiating process as from its next session.

In contrast with what is happening in this double forum, negotiations on regional disarmament are continuing at the bilateral level and agreements such as the INF Treaty have already come into being; others are being concluded, either between the two super-Powers or between the two military alliances. But this dynamic in the negotiations does not seem to have been passed on to our Conference, leaving aside its work on chemical weapons. Given this immobility, and in order to prevent our Conference from seizing up, my delegation would like to associate itself with the call for a process of collective reflection made by many delegations, including those of the United States, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela. We think it is time to look seriously into the question of the effectiveness of the Conference. The former Group of Wise Men accomplished praiseworthy work, which should be put back on the agenda. It is true that the proposals made by the seven wise men do not satisfy all delegations. None the less, if we re-examine them in their true perspective, that of stepping up the negotiations, they will considerably facilitate our task.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia, Ambassador Konqit Sinegiorgis, to whom I extend my warmest congratulations as well as, I am sure, those of the Conference on her well-deserved promotion to ambassadorial rank.

Ms. SINEGIORGIS (Ethiopia): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind words.

As the month is coming to a close and being among the last speakers, it gives me particular pleasure not only to congratulate you on taking up the presidency but also to acknowledge the able and effective leadership that you have demonstrated during your presidency. We are happy to note, in particular, that as a result of your diligence and diplomatic skill the initiative you took has led to fruitful consultations with a view to informal plenary meetings on items 2 and 3 of our agenda, which without any doubt are of primary concern to all of us. We believe that this is a first step in the right direction, and we hope it will lead to effective multilateral negotiations on the issues in question. I might also add that the early establishment of the Ad hoc Committee on item 5 - Prevention of an arms race in outer space - is yet another worthwhile achievement.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, the distinguished Ambassador Hendrik Wagenmakers of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, who successfully guided the work of this Conference during the month of February.

Allow me also to welcome most warmly our new colleagues who have recently joined the Conference on Disarmament, namely the distinguished Ambassadors of Argentina, Canada, China, Cuba, Italy, Kenya, Japan, Mexico, the United States and Venezuela. It is with pleasure that I assure them of my delegation's full co-operation in the successful discharge of our common endeavours.

The decade of the 1980s which has just ended was a decade during which the international community showed particular concern over the spiralling arms race and exerted considerable efforts to achieve concrete disarmament measures. It is to be recalled that two United Nations special sessions devoted to disarmament, and a Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, were held between 1982 and 1988. At the close of the decade two other important conferences that dealt with chemical weapons were convened - the Paris Conference of States Parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol and Other Interested States and the Canberra Government-Industry Conference against Chemical Weapons.

The last part of the 1980s also witnessed the unfolding panorama of a breakthrough in East-West relations. The disappearance of the dark and heavy cloud that had for so long enveloped the international scene has been enthusiastically welcomed by the international community. I must say that this relaxation of international tension has brought about positive changes that are certainly conducive to meaningful negotiations in the field of multilateral disarmament, thus making the future much brighter than it has ever been.

(Ms. Sinegiorgis, Ethiopia)

It is indeed encouraging that during the last few years steps have been taken by countries both at the bilateral and at the multilateral level in such areas as the reduction of conventional armed forces, the restructuring of military forces and other related confidence-building and security-building measures. More particularly, it is gratifying to note that the two super-Powers, having concluded the INF Treaty in 1987, are currently making progress in their negotiations on 50 per cent reductions in their strategic nuclear arms, and towards the banning of chemical weapons.

While we earnestly welcome such developments as encouraging sources of hope, we are agonized by the very fact that a lot remains to be done. In our view and without minimizing the enormous complexities involved in the conduct of nuclear disarmament, the bilateral arms control and disarmament measures that are being carried out should be not only accelerated but also supplemented by adequate multilateral efforts, if we are determined to free the world from the intimidation of the ever-increasing arms race and the ominous threat of insecurity.

In this regard, my delegation regrets that the first three agenda items of the CD dealing with nuclear issues are not given the attention they deserve. As has been stated time and again, the nuclear arms race and the threat of a nuclear war are issues of concern not only to the nuclear-weapon States but to mankind as a whole. It is indeed unacceptable that all nations whether or not they possess nuclear arsenals are forced to live under the threat of these abhorrent weapons. Therefore, it is imperative that this - the only disarmament negotiating body - should give priority attention to the cluster of nuclear issues so as to start the process of the extremely complicated and arduous task of multilateral negotiation on these issues.

My delegation believes that the time has come to reach a common understanding that all nations have a vested interest in these issues. It must be emphasized that no nation could accept the insinuation that nuclear issues are the concern of only those who possess them. This view was clearly expressed in the declaration of the ninth summit of heads of State and/or Government of the non-aligned countries during their meeting in Belgrade in September 1989. The declaration states inter alia that "general and complete disarmament under effective international control is by its very nature unattainable unless all countries join in its implementation. ... the use of nuclear weapons could lead to the extinction of human life on Earth. Since nuclear war threatens the very right to live, all nations have an equal stake in preventing it. ... the ongoing process of disarmament could be quickened and its coverage widened through the common endeavour of the entire international community".

It would be no exaggeration to say that there is growing frustration among the majority of the members of this body because an honest review of the work of the Conference to date reveals the grim picture that very little progress has been registered on the major issues of our agenda. Indeed, if we take only the very first item on our agenda, "Nuclear test ban", despite the high priority attached to it and the prevailing urgent desire by the international community to achieve a comprehensive test-ban treaty at an early date, nuclear tests are still being conducted and the sophistication and

(Ms. Sinegiorgis, Ethiopia)

proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to be humanity's major preoccupation. The lack of an adequate verification mechanism, which is the usual argument for delaying negotiations on this important issue, cannot of course be considered valid. Notwithstanding this and despite the unceasing efforts and numerous initiatives made so far, the CD has not been able to set up an ad hoc committee, let alone begin substantive negotiations on a comprehensive test ban.

In this respect, my delegation highly appreciates the consultations being carried out by His Excellency Ambassador Donowaki of Japan on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on the basis of the Vejvoda proposal, without prejudice to our original positions, of course. The progress report by His Excellency Ambassador Donowaki in his statement of 27 March 1990, that all groups have agreed to work towards consensus on the basis of the draft mandate contained in document CD/863, is indeed encouraging. In particular, we are satisfied by his assessment that "this new development indeed represents a major breakthrough, and confirms the readiness of the Conference to resume substantial work in the ad hoc committee under agenda item 1". We hope that this positive trend will allow us to establish the ad hoc committee on a CTB before the end of our spring session. In our view, the current international situation is favourable for such an undertaking - and we should seize this opportune moment to deal with the issue as expeditiously as possible.

The fourth review conference of the NPT is scheduled to take place in August this year in Geneva. As I stated earlier, even if progress is being made on a bilateral level, we are far from the full implementation of the main provisions of this very important treaty, particularly those relating to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament, safeguards and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and security assurances. At this stage my delegation would only like to register its particular concern over the lack of progress in the above-mentioned issues. It will express its position at the forthcoming review conference.

Regarding the work of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, we welcome the important progress made during the previous year under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Pierre Morel of France, whose dynamic and effective guidance has contributed substantially in laying a firm foundation for the convention. We are also confident that the Ad hoc Committee will achieve yet further results this year under the competent and energetic chairmanship of Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden.

The delegation of Ethiopia is satisfied that the mandate of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons has been considerably improved this year by the agreement reached to include final drafting of the convention. This is a clear reflection of the fact that we have actually reached the stage where we are in a position to come up with one effective, global and verifiable CW convention. No doubt there are still some outstanding problems to be dealt with. But seen against the backdrop of the work done so far, we are of the view that by setting a time frame, we can face the challenge of resolving the remaining issues and conclude the convention at an early date. We also share the prevailing general optimism that a convention on chemical weapons is now within sight.

(Ms. Sinegiorgis, Ethiopia)

As His Excellency Ambassador Stülpnagel said in his statement to the CD on 8 March 1990, "there is no reason why we should not set ourselves equally ambitious goals for the conclusion of the chemical weapons convention. Otherwise we risk being the last to change in a world of change, or those who did not change in time". We concur with this assertion; and in our view, at present the remaining issues are more of a political than a technical nature and as such, in order to conclude the convention what is most required is a firm political will, which we hope will be adequately manifested.

The need to adapt the CD to the changing positive climate prevailing in today's international relations has been sufficiently dealt with by those members who have addressed the CD before me. In this regard, I wish to pay my delegation's special tribute and sincere appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador de Azambuja of Brazil, who at the outset of our Conference this year drew our attention to the importance and pertinence of reviewing our work in the light of the present reality.

It is to be recalled that Ambassador de Azambuja raised a number of very important questions related to this matter. In my view, an appropriate and timely response to those questions would indeed contribute to the effective functioning of the CD. Indeed, as the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil said, "the time has come for us to proceed to a thorough re-examination not only of some of our goals, but of our ways and means of approaching them". Concerning this matter, my delegation fully supports the proposal regarding the reactivation of the Group of Seven, and we hope that the necessary measures will be taken so that the Group can immediately start its work.

I need not remind this negotiating body that a lot is expected from us by the international community. Our achievements are bound to be measured against those lofty expectations. No doubt, a simple stock-taking of our work would clearly reveal that we have no reason to be proud except for the chemical weapons negotiations which are nearing their final stage. Unfortunately, however, even the progress we are witnessing in the chemical weapons negotiations still falls far short of our expectations due to lack of sufficient political will. In the light of the present conducive international atmosphere, which in the view of the Ethiopian delegation is indeed a unique period in contemporary history, we would be judged severely if this opportune moment were to slip by without meeting the challenges posed by mankind's quest to free the world from the threat of all weapons of mass destruction, and in particular the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina, Ambassador García Moritán.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, we represent two countries brought together by common actions and objectives. Suffice it to mention the joint efforts undertaken to implement the Declaration of the Zone of Peace and Co-operation of the South Atlantic. It is in Lagos that the countries bordering the south Atlantic will be holding their second meeting very shortly. This time we will be pleased to have Namibia as a member of our unofficial community of south Atlantic nations.

(Mr. Garcia Moritan, Argentina)

Mr. President, as your presidency draws to a close, I believe we are all absolutely grateful to you for your efforts to guide our substantive work. In fact, a large number of subsidiary bodies have been established, and you are attempting to structure the debate on two important and urgent items on our agenda. You are following the diplomatic tradition of another great Nigerian to whom the cause of disarmament owes a great deal - I refer to Ambassador Adenji.

On this occasion I wish to refer to one of the problems which, as we see it is of increasing importance on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament: the prevention of an arms race in outer space. When joining this body a few weeks ago I had an opportunity to convey to the delegations present here a message from President Menem in which he referred expressly to the space issue. There are specific reasons for this, some of whose characteristics it is my intention to deal with in this statement.

It has become customary to acknowledge the undeniable importance for space to the international community. Hence, I shall not dwell on the many different activities, including military activities, that are carried out by States in space. I do believe it important, however, to reiterate that the international situation at the end of this century as far as space is concerned is different from that of the 1960s and 1970s, which saw the most spectacular achievements in the technology race in space and, in parallel, the development of a body of rules to govern the peaceful use of space. Today we see that there are several countries besides those traditionally considered as space Powers that are acquiring the technologies necessary to gain access to space either directly or by placing satellites in orbit, in addition to the now almost universal use and commercialization of information obtained from outer space. Considered from the perspective of our Conference, these factors give a sense of reality and focus to our efforts. These factors do not merely reflect the existence of a series of general principles on the use of outer space for the benefit of the whole of mankind, but arise out of the concrete and tangible presence of an ever-increasing number of States in space. This of course creates possibilities and prospects which are positive, and at the same time raises important questions, especially from a perspective of global strategy and security.

A very superficial analysis shows the observer that in questions concerned with arms limitation in space, notions of exclusivity and partiality still prevail. When we speak of exclusivity, we refer to the fact that there is obvious reluctance to move forward in the elaboration of multilateral rules that would make the space environment safer and more predictable. What is even more serious is that so far as space is concerned we do not even have the apparently encouraging prospects that apply to terrestrial disarmament. In other words, the absence of a consensus on the need to complete and refine the legal régime applicable to space should be viewed together with the fact that at the bilateral level these agreements seem to come up against serious and thus far unresolved divergences. The ABM Treaty on the prohibition of anti-ballistic systems is a case in point that I need not dwell on further, except perhaps to say that this important bilateral instrument is at present resting on extremely precarious foundations. The two largest military Powers,

(Mr. Garcia Moritan, Argentina)

meanwhile, are forging ahead with strategic defence programmes about whose characteristics and definitions little is known. As an almost ironic feature we are even hearing some of these programmes being justified on the grounds of alleged threats from developing countries.

Without wishing to become involved in arguments about the content of such statements, we believe that it would be regrettable to waste the opportunity to make concrete and effective progress in preventing an arms race in space, at a time when the international situation appears particularly propitious. Nevertheless, my delegation believes that there is a need for an open and balanced dialogue on the subject, and is of the view that this is particularly appropriate now in that the voicing of reservations and judgements about potential threats to global security must be viewed together with more important elements, with more direct and negative consequences which have to do with concrete restrictions on international co-operation in the field of aerospace technology - a mistaken approach already tried out some years ago in the area of nuclear technology, and one which today is obviously at variance with the atmosphere of confidence and mutual trust prevailing in international relations.

Turning now to the work of the Ad hoc Committee, I believe we all agree here that the work done thus far by this subsidiary body of the Conference has been useful. Nevertheless, when the importance and the nature of the subjects before it are analysed in detail, this useful work proves extremely limited in scope. Thus far, we have had a constructive discussion on general questions relating to the prevention of an arms race in space. This has given all of us quite a good idea of what priorities are selected by States when analysing the space issue from a security standpoint. We have examined the legal régime applicable to space, and we have reached the conclusion that on its own it is not sufficient to prevent the possible extension of the arms race to space.

Lastly, we have before us quite a large number of proposals on concrete measures that could be the subject of multilateral negotiations. In the view of our delegation, the way is clear now to take a qualitative step forward in the work of the Committee. The consideration of issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which was an item on the previous agenda, allowed an exchange of views that was essential for determining the general framework of the debate, when dealing with questions such as the relationship between multilateral and bilateral negotiations in this field, the magnitude and lawfulness of military uses of space, the scope of peaceful uses of space, the characteristics of current space programmes and many other matters. My delegation believes that in the light of the discussions that have taken place on this item of the Committee's traditional programme of work, and without prejudice to our continuing this collective analysis, it is now high time for us to recognize the limits of the exercise. These limits are obvious in so far as, in the continuing absence of a progressive structural framework which would enable us to organize and direct the negotiations systematically, a generic debate on such a vast subject can no doubt be useful, but has now fulfilled its original purpose. Progress in space technology gives this subject its own almost unique dynamic, and makes any generic discussion of these characteristics tend inevitably towards

(Mr. Garcia Moritan, Argentina)

irrelevance, unless they are oriented within the framework of a "rolling text". Otherwise the work of the Conference on Disarmament will not rise above the level of an exchange of views more befitting a deliberative body than one with the characteristics of the CD.

As regards the examination of existing agreements relevant to outer space, another item in the traditional programme of work, my delegation proceeds from the premise recognized by the Ad hoc Committee itself that the existing régime, whatever its intrinsic value, does not per se guarantee the prevention of a military race in outer space. In this area too it is our view that discussions must reflect a qualitative change, moving beyond the repetition of positions well known to all, which, far from helping to find a common area of understanding, deepens the differences of interpretation that always arise in the analysis and exposition of a body of rules in any area of human activities subject to legal norms. As far as my delegation is concerned, to say that the existing legal régime is complete, perfect and sufficient is just as incorrect as to say that in this area we are moving in a total juridical vacuum. Perhaps it would not be superfluous if, before becoming immersed in intricate arguments on the scope of the existing rules, we were to recall that the analysis of the legal régime in the context of the Conference on Disarmament has a very specific framework and meaning, as this body in the final analysis is called upon to negotiate agreements to prevent an arms race from being unleashed in this environment. The Conference on Disarmament is first and foremost an organ with the task of negotiating agreements, not interpreting those that already exist. In other words, any analysis of existing rules must be clearly action-oriented, always bearing in mind that the object of the exercise is to identify gaps and define areas that require the elaboration of additional rules.

As to existing proposals and future initiatives, it is logical that the greatest expectations should be centred on this point. They reflect the thinking that delegations and groups have been devoting to the various ways in which States could seek and find acceptable formulae that would reconcile the activities of each with the common objective of providing a predictable and secure framework for an environment into which man has launched more than 3,500 objects. The Committee, especially in recent sessions, has made progress that we have no hesitation in terming qualitative. The fertile area of confidence-building measures in space is progressively gaining ground in the considerations and proposals coming from many delegations belonging to various groups in the Conference. This is a sure sign of the emergence of a framework of consensus which should be given meaningful content.

In our opinion, we already have sufficient critical mass to permit a more systematic approach to the various proposals that have been submitted to the Committee to date in order to build a framework of confidence and predictability in space. The task will doubtless be complex, but we believe that the time has come to move forward resolutely towards the devising of a régime which, at the risk of appearing simplistic, we could call the Helsinki-Stockholm of space. The major difference, and the major challenge facing us, is that in this instance and in view of the subject and scope of the negotiations, the process will not be confined to the 35 States that carried out this successful East-West negotiating process, but will involve

(Mr. Garcia Moritan, Argentina)

all States members of the Conference and the remaining members of the international community which will certainly join in the efforts. We believe that initiatives such as the elaboration of a code of conduct (rules of the road), the various proposals dealing with immunity and partial protection of satellites, those relating to remote sensing and others, form a nucleus around which a body of consistent initiatives could be built that would help to make space an arena for open co-operation in peaceful uses and transparency and predictability for military uses.

Happily, it seems that any statement made in the plenary of this Conference recently must contain a tribute to the present international climate and its promising potentialities. This gives negotiators an inevitable feeling of satisfaction because of the tangible progress made and the progress which is foreshadowed in the near future. On this occasion my delegation has shunned complacency in order to call the attention of the delegations present here to subject area which is of concern to us all, which is open and which has yet to be spelled out in detail. It is the subject area of space.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. That concludes my list of speakers today. Does any other representative wish to take the floor?

As announced at the opening of this plenary meeting, I shall now suspend it and in five minutes' time convene an informal meeting of the Conference to report to you on the results of the consultations undertaken on an appropriate organizational framework to deal with agenda items 2 and 3 during this annual session. We shall also consider a request from a non-member to participate in the work of the Conference.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: the 547th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

As a result of the discussions at the informal meeting just held on an organizational arrangement to deal with agenda items 2 and 3, I wish to put before the Conference for decision the following text:

> "The Conference on Disarmament decides that informal meetings be held during its 1990 session on the substance of agenda items 2, 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament', and 3, 'Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters', and that the discussions at those informal meetings be duly reflected in the annual report of the Conference to the General Assembly of the United Nations."

If there is no objection, I shall consider that the Conference adopts the text that I have read out.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like now to turn to another subject relating to the forthcoming informal meetings. Under the rules of procedure, the President of the Conference has the responsibility, in accordance with the normal duties of any presiding officer, to ensure that discussions at plenary or informal meetings are conducted in an orderly way. Accordingly, I wish to inform you that I have myself taken the initiative of preparing a list of topics for the purpose of facilitating a structured discussion at informal meetings on the substance of agenda items 2 and 3. That list is my own and therefore does not bind any delegation. Furthermore, it is understood that members wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the agenda item, as is the normal practice of the Conference. I shall now read out that list of topics:

Firstly, for agenda item 2:

Implementation of paragraph 50 of the Final Document of SSOD-I in the light of the trends in international relations

Evaluation of the dynamics of the nuclear arms race in the light of recent international developments

The nuclear arms race in all its qualitative aspects, and related matters

Existing international instruments concerning the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament

The interrelation between bilateral and multilateral consideration of the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; participation in negotiations for the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; prerequisites for the participation of all nuclear-weapon States in nuclear disarmament; role of the Conference on Disarmament

Security concepts relating to nuclear weapons in view of recent developments and in the light of the global consequences of existing and envisaged disarmament and arms limitation agreements

The role of nuclear deterrence in keeping the peace for 40 years: the need to proceed carefully and gradually in reducing reliance on nuclear deterrence

Principles governing nuclear disarmament

Proposals on stages and measures of nuclear disarmament

Cessation of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes, and measures against the reuse for weapons purposes of fissionable material released by disarmament steps

Naval nuclear armaments and disarmament

(The President)

Collateral measures with the aim of consolidating and continuing the ongoing process of nuclear disarmament:

Non-proliferation of missiles and other means of delivery of nuclear weapons, as well as their technology

Confidence-building measures promoting nuclear disarmament

Verification in relation to the purposes, scope and nature of agreements

Existing proposals.

Secondly, for agenda item 3:

The impossibility of separating the problems of preventing nuclear war and preventing any war

Measures to exclude the use of nuclear weapons, inter alia:

Paragraph 58 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (code of peaceful conduct that would preclude the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons)

International convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances (text annexed to General Assembly resolution 43/76 E of 7 December 1988)

Prohibition in a legally binding form of the use of nuclear weapons

Measures for confidence-building and crisis prevention:

Measures to enhance confidence and increase openness with regard to military activities, including a multilateral agreement on the prevention of incidents on the high seas

Measures to prevent the accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and to avoid and manage crisis situations, including the establishment of multilateral nuclear alert and crisis control centres

Measures to facilitate the international verification of compliance with arms limitation and disarmament agreements

Criteria and parameters for defensive military postures; military strategies and doctrines; prevention of surprise attacks

New trends in weapons technology and their impact on security and disarmament efforts.

(The President)

I shall now offer the floor to any member wishing to make a statement at present. I have on my list of speakers the distinguished Ambassador of Peru, Ambassador de Rivero.

Mr. de RIVERO (Peru) (translated from Spanish): I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Group of 21 concerning item 2 on our agenda, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". As the statement was originally drafted in English, I shall read it in English.

(continued in English)

The significance which the Group of 21 attaches to agenda item 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", is well known, and its views are already reflected in documents CD/64, CD/116, CD/180, CD/526 and CD/819. In keeping with its consistent position, the Group of 21 presented the draft mandate contained in CD/819/Rev.1 on 27 July 1989. It is a mandate that reflects the two crucial aspects of this issue - the urgency that the issue demands and the need to deal with it in the multilateral negotiating framework of the Conference on Disarmament. The Group of 21 regrets that despite the preliminary work carried out on this subject during previous years, it has still not been found possible to set up an ad hoc committee on this item.

In keeping with the discussions that took place on this item in the previous years, and as reflected in the report of the CD contained in document CD/956, the Group of 21 is convinced that the need for urgent multilateral action on the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, leading to the adoption of concrete measures, has been amply demonstrated. In its opinion, multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament are long overdue. It welcomes the progress achieved in the bilateral negotiations but reiterates that because of their limited scope and the number of parties involved, these can never replace or nullify the genuine multilateral search for universally applicable nuclear disarmament measures. It believes that all nations have a vital interest in negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The existence of nuclear weapons and their quantitative and qualitative development directly and fundamentally jeopardize the vital security interests of both nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. It is an accepted fact that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and the survival of civilization. It is essential, therefore, to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects in order to avoid the danger of nuclear war. At the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Belgrade in September 1989, it was noted that "while the overall international climate is positive, there is still much to be done to halt the arms race". The Belgrade summit also emphasized the extreme urgency of adopting measures for nuclear disarmament through a time-bound programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is clear that global security cannot be based on doctrines of nuclear deterrence. On the contrary, the advent of nuclear weapons obliges us to undertake a re-examination of the basic relationship between armaments and security. The belief that security can be enhanced through possession of

(Mr. de Rivero, Peru)

nuclear weapons must be challenged because the accumulation of nuclear weaponry constitutes a threat to the very security that it seeks to protect. In the nuclear age, the only valid doctrine is the achievement of collective security through nuclear disarmament. The INF Treaty, as the first disarmament agreement which eliminates an entire class of nuclear weaponry, is a further vindication of the view that the reduction of nuclear arsenals leads to an enhancement of global security.

The Group of 21 is convinced that the doctrines of nuclear deterrence, far from being responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, lie at the root of the ongoing arms race and lead to greater insecurity and instability in international relations. Moreover, such doctrines, which in the ultimate analysis are predicated upon a willingness to use nuclear weapons, cannot be the basis for preventing the outbreak of a nuclear war, a war which would affect participants and innocent bystanders alike. The Group of 21 rejects as politically and morally unjustifiable the view that the security of the whole world should be made to depend on the state of relations existing among nuclear-weapon States.

In the task of achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-weapon States bear a special responsibility. In keeping with respect for the security concerns of the non-nuclear nations, and refraining from action leading to intensification of the nuclear arms race, the nuclear-weapon States must accept the obligation to take positive and practical steps towards the adoption and implementation of concrete measures towards nuclear disarmament.

The realization that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought is a significant step forward, which must be translated into practical steps. Paragraph 50 of the Final Document of SSOD-I indicated guidelines for the CD to provide an effective and complementary process in the multilateral framework. The Group of 21 remains firmly committed to the implementation of this paragraph, and believes that the establishment of an ad hoc committee provides the best means to achieve this objective. The Group stresses that its willingness to accept the format of the informal plenary to discuss this agenda item this year in no way prejudices its principled stand reflected in CD/64, CD/116, CD/180, CD/526, CD/819 and CD/819/Rev.1. The Group expects substantial movement on the issue of setting up an ad hoc committee on this agenda item next year, in keeping with the importance of the subject within the global disarmament agenda.

Mr. SHAHBAZ (Pakistan): I have asked for the floor today to make the following statement on behalf of the Group of 21 with regard to agenda item 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". The statement reads as follows.

We in the Group of 21 wish to express our regret at the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to set up an ad hoc committee on agenda item 3. We have shown ourselves ready to exchange views on this subject, here or in the General Assembly. But some delegations have not agreed with this, as their priorities seem to be different.

(Mr. Shahbaz, Pakistan)

I do not need to emphasize the importance that our Group attaches to this item. We believe that the greatest peril facing the world is the threat of destruction from a nuclear war, and that consequently the removal of this threat is the most acute and urgent task of the present day. While nuclear-weapon States possess the primary responsibility for avoiding nuclear war, all nations have a vital interest in the negotiation of measures for prevention of nuclear war, in view of the catastrophic consequences that such a war would have for mankind. As far back as 1961, General Assembly resolution 1653 (XVI) declared that the use of nuclear weapons, besides being a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, would be contrary to the laws of humanity and a crime against mankind and civilization. Keeping this in view the Belgrade Declaration, adopted in September 1989 at the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, emphasized the extreme urgency of achieving nuclear disarmament through the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and "stressed the need for the conclusion of an international agreement prohibiting all use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances".

It is a matter of concern for all delegations present here that no progress has been possible on this item since its introduction as a separate item on the CD's agenda in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/183 G. During these years the arms race has accelerated, leading to the expansion of nuclear-weapon stockpiles and the introduction of still more lethal warheads into them.

The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly requested the Conference on Disarmament to undertake, as a matter of the highest priority, negotiations with a view to achieving agreement on appropriate and practical measures for the prevention of nuclear war and to establish for that purpose an ad hoc committee on this subject. During the 1989 General Assembly session there were three resolutions on this subject, which were adopted with overwhelming majorities. Two of these resolutions, 44/119 B on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and 44/119 E on the prevention of nuclear war, were introduced by members of the Group of 21.

In view of the irreversible consequences of a nuclear war, it is clear that conventional wars cannot, under any circumstances, be equated with nuclear war since nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction. In this context, invoking the Charter to justify the use of nuclear weapons in the exercise of the right of self-defence against conventional armed attack is completely unjustifiable. We remain convinced that the shortest way to remove the danger of nuclear war lies in the elimination of nuclear weapons, and that pending the achievement of nuclear disarmament, the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited. We have welcomed the declaration by then President Reagan and then General Secretary Gorbachev in November 1985 that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought", as also its reconfirmation in the joint statements issued subsequently. Now is the time to translate this will into a binding commitment.

The Group of 21 remains committed to the position expressed in CD/515/Rev.5 dated 27 July 1989, which contains a non-negotiating mandate for the establishment of an ad hoc committee that will permit thorough

(Mr. Shahbaz, Pakistan)

consideration of all aspects - legal, political, technical, military - of all the proposals before the Conference. We believe that such consideration will not only contribute to better understanding of the subject but also pave the way for negotiations for an agreement on prevention of nuclear war. Such an objective cannot be achieved only through discussions in the plenary or informal meetings. We are disappointed, therefore, that despite the urgency accorded to this subject and the flexibility displayed by the Group of 21, the Conference on Disarmament is not able to discharge its own mandate, which is reflected in paragraph 120 of the Final Document of SSOD-I. However, the Group of 21 is prepared to start consideration of this item in informal plenary meetings in the hope that the importance of the matter will lead to a rethinking on the part of those who have expressed reservations on the mandate proposed by us.

Mr. von STULPNAGEL (Federal Republic of Germany): The delegations of the Western Group on whose behalf I speak have constantly stressed the significance of the nuclear items on our agenda. For many years draft mandates as just alluded to, calling for the establishment of ad hoc committees on these agenda items, have not been able to meet consensus. The Western Group continues to believe that the problems of nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war can only be dealt with satisfactorily in the broader context of prevention of war in general. Narrowing the discussion down only to the problems of nuclear weapons would not do justice to the import of the objectives. What is needed is a comprehensive approach embracing arms control and disarmament and defence. It is important, therefore, to ensure that interrelationships between arms control issues and defence requirements, and between the various arms control areas, are fully considered. It is with this objective that the Western countries continue actively and constructively to approach these items. The Western Group considers that the establishment of subsidiary bodies for items 2 and 3 remains inappropriate. Under current circumstances, informal and plenary meetings constitute the most suitable framework for the continuation of work on the important nuclear questions.

Despite their preference for the consideration of these items in formal plenary sessions, the Western Group is ready - despite rumours to the contrary - as they have been in past years, to play a full part in the informal meetings on items 2 and 3. We accept the informal nature of this debate, which we feel enables us to have a useful debate in this area. Against the background that no consensus could be reached to establish lists of items, or to follow any other listing procedures, we take note of what you have said after the decision just adopted by the Conference on the list of topics which, in your opinion, should be discussed during informal meetings on items 2 and 3. As you pointed out, Mr. President, these lists were read out under your sole responsibility and are binding upon no delegation. We would also like to stress that we do not see in your statement any precedent whatsoever for decisions relating to the activities of this Conference.

Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic): In my capacity as subject co-ordinator for item 2 and on behalf of my colleague, Ambassador Kostov, as subject co-ordinator for item 3, I have asked for the floor to express the views of our Group of countries concerning the decision just now agreed upon.

(Mr. Dietze, German Democratic Republic)

The Group on whose behalf I am speaking feels satisfied with the decision just taken by the Conference. The holding of informal meetings of the plenary on agenda item 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", and item 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, offers all delegations the opportunity to enter into a specific exchange of views on topics of disarmament which have high priority in order to prepare the ground for negotiations.

We believe that the time is most appropriate to act along these lines. The improved international relations have created favourable circumstances for devising new security concepts and establishing the corresponding security structures. The example of the INF Treaty strikingly shows that nuclear disarmament is feasible. A Soviet-American treaty on the halving of their strategic offensive weapons is expected to be concluded before the end of this year. And last but not least, in Europe a start will be made on conventional disarmament soon.

The international community also expects the Conference on Disarmament to make a distinctive contribution in the fields of nuclear disarmament and prevention of nuclear war. A first step has been undertaken with today's decision. We hope that in the wake of the forthcoming exchange of views a convergence of positions will be achieved.

Our Group is willing to make a contribution of its own towards this end. In order to enable practical work on these agenda items to get under way, our Group has also decided for the time being not to insist on the establishment of committees on agenda items 2 and 3, which continues to be our preference.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I should like to congratulate you on having guided the consultations of the groups in an able and efficient manner to a successful conclusion. Your unremitting efforts in this endeavour deserve the appreciation and gratitude of my Group.

Mr. HOU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like to point out that, under your able guidance progress has at least been made on items 2 and 3 through constructive consultations, enabling the Conference to adopt a decision today to hold separate informal meetings on these items. This is another step forward in the month of March. I would like to express my appreciation for your untiring efforts in this regard, as well as for the constructive co-operation of the Group of 21. I would like to stress that we have listened with great interest and understanding to the important statements made by the Ambassador of Peru and the delegation of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 21.

Item 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", and item 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", directly concern important questions which have a bearing on international peace and security. They have naturally aroused the widespread concern of the international community. For this reason they are also two of the most important items on the agenda of this Conference. In recent years SSODs, the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries and the General Assembly have all adopted

(Mr. Hou, China)

important documents and resolutions on these items, calling on the CD to submit them to serious consideration and negotiation. Consequently, the Conference on Disarmament should carry out in-depth discussions of these items in a more formal and constructive way. However, for reasons known to all, the CD has so far been unable to perform this task. We cannot but express our regret in this regard.

The Chinese delegation has all along attached great importance to these two items, and has actively participated in discussions. We support the principled position of the Group of 21 on the establishment of ad hoc committees on these items. We have already set out our clear-cut principled stand in a comprehensive and systematic way, and have made a constructive proposal, and we have also put forward a working paper.

On 27 February Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, in his important statement to the plenary of the CD, once again reaffirmed the positive stand of the Chinese Government. He emphasized the urgent need for the cessation of the nuclear arms race, stressed the priority nature of nuclear disarmament, underlined the special responsibility of the two super-Powers and advocated the right of all countries to take part in the discussion and settlement of these important questions on an equal basis. The Chinese delegation will continue to work with the Group of 21 and other delegations in the above-mentioned spirit, and will make its own contributions to the solution of these important matters.

Mr. President, this will be the final meeting in March under your presidency. In the past month your rich experience and your great diplomatic skill, have left a deep impression on our minds. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my admiration for your active efforts and outstanding contribution and to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

The PRESIDENT: The informal meetings referred to will be devoted alternately to agenda item 2 and agenda item 3. We will hold the first informal meeting on Tuesday 10 April, immediately after the plenary meeting on that date, in order to provide time for delegations to prepare their statements. As a rule, we shall deal with one agenda item per week, either on Tuesdays or Thursdays, on the understanding that, if for any reason we have no time to listen to all speakers listed for a particular day, we shall continue at the end of the following plenary meeting. Members wishing to place their names on the list in advance may do so, but this is not necessary.

I should like now to turn to another subject. I invite you to turn to document CD/WP.383, containing a note by the President on a request from a non-member to participate in the work of the Conference. I suggest that we now adopt the relevant decision.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: In connection with the decision that we have just taken, I wish to declare for the record that the statement made by the President at the resumed 534th plenary meeting of the Conference also applies to the request that we have just discussed today.

The secretariat has circulated today at my request a timetable for meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies during the coming week. The timetable has been prepared in consultation with the chairmen of subsidiary bodies and, as usual, is merely indicative and can be changed if necessary. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the timetable.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As I have no other business for today, I should now like to make my concluding statement.

Since this is the last plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of March, I would like as the outgoing President of the Conference to make a few remarks regarding our work. However, before doing so, let me express to all of you my sincere appreciation for the very valuable support which you have so kindly accorded me during my presidency.

You will recall that on the first day of my term of office, my Foreign Minister addressed this august body. He underscored the importance which the Government of Nigeria attaches to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. He then gave an assurance that Nigeria will continue to work actively in this forum and others to initiate and support proposals for the promotion and strengthening of international peace and security. I also on that day pledged to continue to deal with all those matters which were still subject to consultation.

I set as a priority objective the re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, at the earliest possible date; and the conduct of intensive consultations on agenda items 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", and 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". On agenda item 1, I welcomed the untiring efforts of Ambassador Donowaki of Japan, and promised to make myself available whenever necessary in order to accomplish the objective of promoting agreement on that subject. I equally drew attention to the need to expedite action on the expansion of the membership of the Conference and its improved and effective functioning.

It is against the background of the foregoing that I now intend to make a few remarks regarding my work as President of the Conference during this month. On 8 March, the Conference successfully re-established the Ad hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. The Ad hoc Committee, as you are aware, is currently carrying out consultations regarding its programme of work. It is my sincere hope that, given the spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding, it will be possible for the Committee to start its work as soon as possible.

(The President)

As earlier indicated, I have conducted consultations on agenda items 2 and 3. I am happy to report to you that following these consultations, agreement has now been reached to hold informal meetings on the substance of agenda items 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", and 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", on the basis of the precedent of the 1987 arrangement for agenda item 2. These informal meetings are in my view the reflection of the beginning of adjustments in the Conference on Disarmament to the new international situation.

I would have been pleased to welcome the re-establishment of the all-important Ad hoc Committee on agenda item 1, "Nuclear test ban". I am sure that all members noted the statement made last Tuesday by Ambassador Donowaki of Japan in connection with the determined efforts that he has undertaken to obtain agreement on a mandate for an ad hoc committee under agenda item 1. His efforts will continue and I hope will succeed. At least, he has moved to a new stage in his consultations, that of drafting. This has been a welcome development during the month of March.

Informal consultations on other pending subjects are also worthy of attention. For instance, on the expansion of the membership of the Conference and the improved and effective functioning of the CD, I expect that my successor will continue the ongoing consultations with the hope of reaching consensus on those subjects.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the various group and item co-ordinators for their significant contributions towards finding solutions on a number of problems. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Komatina, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Berasategui, whose assistance, co-operation and friendship made it a lot easier for me to fulfil my duty. My gratitude also goes to all the staff of the secretariat, as well as the interpreters and translators, whose competence and dedication we all appreciate.

Lastly, I would like to extend to my successor, Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan, my very best wishes for success in the exercise of his mandate. I am sure that under his competent guidance, the Conference will be able to carry on its work in the most efficient possible manner. I would like to assure him of my delegation's constructive support. As Ambassador Kamal will be away in Islamabad from 1 to 7 April 1990, his able deputy, Mr. Shahbaz, will preside during the interim period. I would also like to assure him of the co-operation of my delegation.

That concludes my statement. I shall now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 3 April, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.